



News (/News) | Technology (/Technology)

How airlines are scrambling to provide passengers with touchless technology

By Linda Fox (/Linda-Fox) | October 7, 2020

"Minimum viable product" has taken on a new meaning for airlines as they rush to meet the need for contactless solutions.

Grant Milstead, vice president digital technology at **United Airlines (<https://united.com>)**, says during the pandemic, carriers have had to get products to market in a matter of days.

"We're really doubling down on agile and it's also a little bit scrappy because there's very little investment. It's about solutions that leverage existing technology that we know and have in our business. We're thinking in terms of hours and days instead of months."

Providing an example of a recent rapid deployment of technology, Stephanie Abeler, senior director, service factory ground operations for **Lufthansa (<https://lufthansagroup.com>)**, says Apple's iOS platform was leveraged by the group to help repatriate passengers when the pandemic hit.

Meanwhile, IBM has developed an app to improve the gate experience and alleviate crowding, according to the company's Rob Ranieri, vice president and partner, global transportation and travel offering lead.

All three were part of a Touchless Technology virtual event, organized by **World Aviation Festival (<https://www.terrapinn.com/conference/aviation-festival/index.stm>)** this week, which also noted the importance of setting expectations for passengers who are about to travel.

Milstead says customers are thinking about what the experience will be like and need help with understanding how the journey will unfold.

"It's a very different travel experience for passengers right now and a lot of our innovations come down to helping them understand."

He adds that the airline lets passengers text before departure to learn what to expect and has also enabled standbys and requests for earlier flights via mobile.

Many carriers are now looking at increased self-service options for travelers as part of providing a contactless experience.

Fellow panelist Mark Sargeant, a worldwide industry lead at **Apple (<https://apple.com>)**, says priorities for its customers include kiosks, business chat functionality and indoor mapping.

He also says airlines are not just looking at frequent flyers but "across the spectrum at folks who don't travel as much."

Sargeant highlighted Apple's App Clips, a mini app version designed for one or two tasks, as a way to help less frequent flyers with quick information updates and services such as check-in.

He also talks about understanding how each customer wants to travel and what they are comfortable with.

"Not every customer will want to use a mobile. There will be times when paper-based documents will be needed and others who will want more high-touch engagement."

Sargeant says airlines will need to use data shared with them on preferences "very sacredly" to instill trust but tailor experience to expectations.

Echoing the sentiment, Milstead says that airlines will need to rely on AI and machine learning to help them identify customers that are traveling now.

Lufthansa (/Deutsche-Lufthansa-AG-2147286958)

United (/United-Continental-Holdings-Inc-2147286970)

Airline (/Airline)

Airport (/Airport/Airport/16864)

Business Travel (/Business-Travel)

Travel Planning (/Travel-Planning)

Artificial Intelligence (/Artificial-Intelligence)

Machine Learning (/Machine-Learning)

Mobile (/Mobile)

Coronavirus (/Coronavirus)

Editors Pick (/Editors-Pick)

ALSO ON PHOCUSWIRE

<p>Sounding Off: Stop burying your head in ...</p>	<p>Airbnb is set for a blockbuster IPO - ...</p>	<p>How diversity in travel can move from ...</p>	<p>Will "trips become a</p>
<p>a month ago • 7 comments Action around diversity is the important thing because it's a step forward. It's a ...</p>	<p>2 months ago • 2 comments Even amid COVID-19, Airbnb may be sneakily well-positioned to come ...</p>	<p>a month ago • 1 comment During the Diversity in Leadership panel at Phocuswright Europe, ...</p>	<p>2 months ago Several airlir cruise lines i offering trips</p>

0 Comments

Phocuswire

Disqus' Privacy Policy


Login ▾

Recommend

Tweet

Share

Sort by Newest ▾



More on Technology



(/digital-health-passport-covid-begins-trials)

Airlines begin trialing “CommonPass” digital health passport (/digital-health-passport-covid-begins-trials)

News | Technology



(/Business-travel-coronavirus-old-answers-new-questions)

Data - the old answer to new questions in travel (/Business-travel-coronavirus-old-answers-new-questions)

Opinion | Technology



(/New-reality-interview-Andres-Fabris-Traxo)

COMING SOON: New Reality With... Andres Fabris of Traxo (/New-reality-interview-Andres-Fabris-Traxo)

News | Technology

The Latest



(/Coronavirus-impact-travel-industry)

LIVE BLOG: Coronavirus and the travel industry - impact and recovery (/Coronavirus-impact-travel-industry)

News | Online



(/sounding-off-85-sustainability-in-travel)

Sounding Off: Sustainability efforts in travel can't be all talk, little action (/sounding-off-85-sustainability-in-travel)

Interview | Online



(/diversity-and-inclusion-strategies-festive-road-caroline-strachan)

VIDEO: How travel companies can create a more “equal and human” workplace (/diversity-and-inclusion-strategies-festive-road-caroline-strachan)

News | Online



Copyright © 2020 by Northstar Travel Media LLC. All Rights Reserved. 116 West 32nd Street, New York, NY 10001 U.S. | Telephone: +1 860 350-4084

Phocuswright (<https://www.phocuswright.com/>) • The Phocuswright Conference (<https://www.phocuswrightconference.com/>) • Phocuswright Europe (<https://www.phocuswrighteurope.com/>) • Battleground (<https://www.phocuswrightbattleground.com/>) • TTE (<https://www.traveltechnologyeurope.com/>) • Web In Travel (<https://www.webintravel.com/>) • Inntopia (<https://corp.inntopia.com/>) • Retail Travel

(<https://www.northstartravelgroup.com/Audiences/Retail-Travel>) • Hotel Investment

(<https://www.northstartravelgroup.com/Audiences/Hotel-Investment>)